



# Goodwin's Weekly

*"A Thinking Paper for Thinking People"*

## THE YELLOW PERIL IN ITS LATEST ASPECT

SPOKESMAN of the "Yellow Peril," Viscount Ishii, Japan's ambassador to the United States, has delivered a challenge to the American people and to the world. For all his guarded language he has placed the Japanese question on a basis which, if adhered to, will lead either to American surrender or war. That surrender the ambassador demands shall be made at once. War he gently refrains from threatening, but he tries to state the issue so that the United States must abandon what he believes to be a disguise and come out in the open.

In the language of diplomacy he has told us that the exclusion of Japanese from the United States and the discriminations of certain states by law against the Japanese is not a question of labor and immigration, but a question of race prejudice and he insists that the covenant of the League of Nations shall specifically require all nations, the United States included, to abandon discriminations. As a matter of fact the present covenant does that very thing by indirection. Unless we can prove to an international tribunal that our Japanese question is purely a domestic problem—and that is unlikely—we bind ourselves to open up the entire controversy for trial by the league as soon as Japan can force the issue. If the league council decides against us we must submit or become an "outlaw nation." If the council decides against the Japanese they will withdraw from the league and bide their time until they can band the colored races of the world against the whites.

But let us quote the ambassador's exact words:

"And now that the war for international justice is about to come to its happy termination and when the world league for permanent peace is being contrived, why should this question of RACE PREJUDICE, RACE DISCRIMINATION AND RACE HUMILIATION alone remain unremedied? When restriction or prohibition of discriminatory treatment of chattles and commodities is being adequately provided for, why should this unjust and unjustifiable discrimination against persons be allowed to remain untouched?"

The ambassador is aware that the problem has a labor aspect and admits it, but he treats it as trivial and challenges the League of Nations to justify the "race prejudice, race discrimination and race humiliation" involved.

What shall the American people do? Shall they accept Count Ishii's statement of the issue and admit that fundamentally it is a question, not of labor and immigration, but of race prejudice? And how can they escape making this admission if it is true? At any time Japan can force the issue upon us by bringing about a warlike condition which will place us on trial before the executive council of the League of Nations or before a court of arbitration.

It may be argued in defense of the covenant of the league that even if the present covenant is not adopted some international means of arbitration will be established, that ultimately the issue will come up for arbitrament, that if we refuse to arbitrate we will be in no bet-

ter plight than under the present covenant and that our final resort must be war.

By many the "Yellow Peril" has been denounced as unreal. Especially was it derided in the last days of war because German propagandists had seized upon the issue to frighten us away from an alliance with Great Britain and Japan. During the war every mention of the "Yellow Peril" was patriotically denounced as special pleading for the Hun. And the charge could not be denied.

But now that the war is ended the Japanese themselves proclaim the existence of the peril in a formal statement by their ambassador to the United States. In order to remove any excuse on our part for claiming that the issue is one of labor and immigration he pledges Japan to observe faithfully the "gentleman's agreement" to restrict emigration of Japanese laborers to this country. Thus does he try to strip the decks for the fight.

"You shall no longer be permitted by Japan to pretend that this is an economic question," he seems to say. "It is clearly a question of race prejudice and you know it. Come out in the open and admit it or we will force you to do so sooner or later. The League of Nations would be stopping half way in founding peace on justice if it refused to compel Americans to abandon their race prejudice against the Japanese and repeal all laws that prevent Japanese from becoming citizens of the United States on an equality with all other citizens; also all laws discriminating against the Japanese, whether they are allowed to become citizens or not."

The Japanese, once before, tried to bring us to a parting of the ways. The Japanese envoy said to Mr. Bryan, then secretary of state: "Is that the last word?" and Mr. Bryan adroitly replied: "There is no last word between friends." The Japanese response to that is Count Ishii's speech. In substance he says: "If you wish to remain friendly join in a covenant which will bind you to abandon 'race prejudice, race discrimination and race humiliation'?"

Can we reply adequately to such a challenge by going over the old arguments about the competition between cheap and costly labor? Will we not, sooner or later, be compelled to frame our reply to meet the issue as stated by the Japanese?

If we are not yet clear what we can do when the time comes to settle the dispute we should be quite clear as to what we should not do. We should not enter into a League of Nations whose covenant inevitably forces the issue upon us. If we do enter the league the question should be excluded either specifically or by implication.

Some day we may decide that the Japanese are right and, in that case, there will be no need to avoid such a covenant as President Wilson has presented to us for our acceptance. But it is certain that the American people are not yet ready to admit the correctness of the Japanese view and abolish all the laws aimed to exclude the Japanese from citizenship and from full participation in our national life.